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POLITICAL UPDATE

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America's "most perplexing" 3rd party meets in Washington

Their goal: To select a 50-state presidential candidate

WASHINGTON, DC — Look out Bill Clinton and Bob Dole — you're both going to have some competition this November. But it won't be a conservative or liberal.

And it won't be Ross Perot.

Delegates from around the nation are flocking to Washington, DC, this week for the first major presidential nominating convention of the summer.

Their goal: To select the presidential candidate of the feisty Libertarian Party — which has been described as America's most ideologically perplexing third party.

"We confuse people because we don't fit into the traditional left/right spectrum," said the party's National Director Perry Willis. "For example, the presidential candidate we nominate will run far to the *right* of Bob Dole on economic issues, and far to the *left* of Bill Clinton on social issues."

But, said Willis, the party is actually remarkably *consistent.*

"Libertarians advocate the highest degree of both personal and economic liberty," he said. "That's why, for example, we want to eliminate the income tax *and* legalize gay marriage. That's why we oppose Internet censorship *and* want to repeal the so-called assault weapons ban. In today's harsh partisan atmosphere, the Libertarian Party may be the closest thing to common ground between liberals and conservatives."

Libertarians are hoping their unusual "pro-liberty" message will resonate with voters in 1996, as Americans, surly and distrustful of government, look for new alternatives in the voting booth.

To make sure they are heard, Libertarians expect to be on the ballot in all 50 states for the second presidential election in a row.

Party delegates will gather at the Hyatt Capitol Hill hotel from July 4th to 7th to nominate their presidential candidate and ratify a national platform. And unlike the Republicans and Democrats, who each receive $12 million of taxpayer's money to fund their national conventions, the Libertarian event is completely privately financed.

"We would never take a penny from the government for our convention," said Willis. "We don't believe in political welfare."

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